



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAM (EEG) SIGNATURE OF AUTISM SPECTRUM
DISORDER (ASD) CHILDREN**

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ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAM (EEG) SIGNATURE OF AUTISM
SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) CHILDREN

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Acknowledgement	ii
Table of Content	iii-xii
List of Figure	ix-xix
List of Tables	xiii-xv
Abstract	xviii-xix
<i>Abstrak</i>	xx-xxi

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Background of study	2
1.1.1	Sociability aspect	4
1.1.2	Repetitive or rigid language	5
1.1.3	Narrow interests and extraordinary abilities	5
1.1.4	Uneven language development	5
1.1.5	Poor nonverbal conversation skills	6
1.1.6	Behaviours of ASD	6
1.2	Problem Statement	7
1.3	Objectives of the Study	9
1.3.1	General Objective	9
1.3.2	Specific Objectives	9
1.4	Conceptual and Operational definition of term/variables	9
1.4.1	Autism Spectrum Disorder	9
1.4.2	Qualitative Electroencephalogram (qEEG)	10
1.4.3	Neurofeedback Training (NFT)	10
1.4.4	Brainwave Patterns	11
1.5	Kuching Autistic Association (KAA)	13
1.6	Significance of Study	13
1.7	Limitation of the Study	14

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.0	Introduction	15
2.1	Autism Spectrum Disorder	16
2.2	Primary Impairment in Autism	18
2.2.1	Speech and Communication among ASD	18
2.2.1.1	Common Language Patterns Observe in Children with Autism	19
2.2.2	Social Impairment	20
2.2.3	Restricted Repetitive Behaviour	21
2.3	Findings From Previous Research	23
2.3.1	Qualitative Electroencephalogram (qEEG) for ASD	23
2.3.2	Neurofeedback (EEG) for ASD	28
2.3.3	Brain connectivity of Autism Spectrum Disorder's Brain	29
2.4	10/20 Electrode Placement	31
2.5	Types of Brainwave Patterns and its Functions	32
2.6	Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist	34
2.7	Hair Tissue Mineral Analysis	35
2.8	Kuching Autistic Association's Students' Progress Report	36
2.9	Summary	37

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.0	Introduction	38
3.1	Research Design	39
3.2	Participant	40
3.3	Phases of the Study	41
3.3.1	Phase 1	41
3.3.1.1	Research Informant	41
3.3.2	Phase 2	41
3.3.3	Phase 3	41
3.3.3.1	The Neurofeedback Training	41
3.3.4	Phase 4	42
3.4	Instrumentation	42
3.4.1	Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist (ATEC)	42
3.4.1.1	Importance of ATEC	43
3.4.2	Quantitative Electroencephalography (qEEG)	44
3.4.3	Neurofeedback Device (EEG)	46
3.5	Procedure for Data Collection	47
3.5.1	Quantitative Electroencephalogram, Neurofeedback Device and ATEC Form	48
3.5.2	Procedure for QEEG's Data Collection	48
3.5.3	Procedure for Interview and Observation	48
3.5.4	KAA's Student Progress Report	50
3.6	Procedure for Data Analysis	50
3.6.1	Data Analysis For ATEC	50
3.6.1.1	Range of Score	50
3.6.2	Data Analysis For QEEG	51
3.6.3	Data Analysis For EEG	52
3.6.4	Descriptive Data Analysis	52
3.7	Summary	53

Chapter 4 Findings and discussions

4.0	Introduction	54
4.1	Demographic Background	55
4.2	First and Second qEEG Mapping of All Participants	56
4.3	Individuals analysis of qEEG Brain Mapping	58
4.3.1	Participant A	58
4.3.1.1	First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of Participant A	58
4.3.1.2	Delta Brainwave for Participant A of First qEEG	58
4.3.1.3	Delta Brainwave for Participant A of Second qEEG	59
4.3.1.3	Theta Brainwave for Participant A of First qEEG	59
4.3.1.5	Theta Brainwave for Participant A of Second qEEG	60
4.3.1.6	Alpha Brainwave for Participant A of First qEEG	60
4.3.1.7	Alpha Brainwave for Participant A of Second qEEG	61
4.3.1.8	Beta Brainwave for Participant A of First qEEG	61
4.3.1.9	Beta Brainwave for Participant A of Second qEEG	62
4.3.1.10	Brainwave Patterns and Correlate Behaviour(s) of Participant A	63
4.3.2	Participant B	64
4.3.2.1	First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of Participant B	64
4.3.2.2	Delta Brainwave for Participant B of First qEEG	64

4.3.2.3 Delta Brainwave for Participant B of Second qEEG	64
4.3.2.4 Theta Brainwave for Participant B of First qEEG	65
4.3.2.5 Theta Brainwave for Participant B of Second qEEG	65
4.3.2.6 Alpha Brainwave for Participant B of First qEEG	65
4.3.2.7 Alpha Brainwave for Participant B of Second qEEG	66
4.3.2.8 Beta Brainwave for Participant B of First qEEG	66
4.3.2.9 Beta Brainwave for Participant N of Second qEEG	67
4.3.2.10 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate Behaviour(s) of Participant B	68
4.3.3 Participant C	69
4.3.3.1 First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of Participant C	69
4.3.3.2 Delta Brainwave for Participant C of First qEEG	69
4.3.3.3 Delta Brainwave for Participant C of Second qEEG	69
4.3.3.4 Theta Brainwave for Participant C of First qEEG	70
4.3.3.5 Theta Brainwave for Participant C of Second qEEG	70
4.3.3.6 Alpha Brainwave for Participant C of First qEEG	71
4.3.3.7 Alpha Brainwave for Participant C of Second qEEG	71
4.3.3.8 Beta Brainwave for Participant C of First	71

qEEG	
4.3.3.9 Beta Brainwave for Participant C of Second	72
qEEG	
4.3.3.10 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate	73
Behaviour(s) of Participant C	
4.3.4 Participant D	74
4.3.4.1 First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of	74
Participant D	
4.3.4.2 Delta Brainwave for Participant D of Second	74
qEEG	
4.3.4.3 Theta Brainwave for Participant D of Second	75
qEEG	
4.3.4.4 Alpha Brainwave for Participant D of Second	75
qEEG	
4.3.4.5 Beta Brainwave for Participant D of Second	75
qEEG	
4.3.4.6 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate	76
Behaviour(s) of Participant D	
4.3.5 Participant E	77
4.3.5.1 First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of	77
Participant E	
4.3.5.2 Delta Brainwave for Participant E of First	77
qEEG	
4.3.5.3 Delta Brainwave for Participant E of Second	77
qEEG	
4.3.5.4 Theta Brainwave for Participant E of First	78
qEEG	
4.3.5.5 Theta Brainwave for Participant E of Second	78
qEEG	
4.3.5.6 Alpha Brainwave for Participant E of First	78
qEEG	

4.3.5.7 Alpha Brainwave for Participant E of Second qEEG	78
4.3.5.8 Beta Brainwave for Participant E of First qEEG	79
4.3.5.9 Beta Brainwave for Participant E of Second qEEG	79
4.3.5.10 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate Behaviour(s) of Participant E	80
4.3.6 Participant F	82
4.3.6.1 First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of Participant F	82
4.3.6.2 Delta Brainwave for Participant F of First qEEG	82
4.3.6.3 Delta Brainwave for Participant F of Second qEEG	82
4.3.6.4 Theta Brainwave for Participant F of First qEEG	83
4.3.6.5 Theta Brainwave for Participant F of Second qEEG	83
4.3.6.6 Alpha Brainwave for Participant F of First qEEG	83
4.3.6.7 Alpha Brainwave for Participant F of Second qEEG	84
4.3.6.8 Beta Brainwave for Participant F of First qEEG	84
4.3.6.9 Beta Brainwave for Participant F of Second qEEG	84
4.3.6.10 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate Behaviour(s) of Participant F	85
4.3.7 Participant G	88
4.3.7.1 First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of Participant G	88

4.3.7.2 Delta Brainwave for Participant G of First qEEG	88
4.3.7.3 Delta Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	88
4.3.7.4 Theta, Alpha and Beta Brainwave for Participant G of First qEEG	89
4.3.7.5 Theta Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	89
4.3.7.6 Alpha Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	89
4.3.7.7 Beta Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	90
4.3.7.8 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate Behaviour(s) of Participant G	91
4.3.8 Participant G	93
4.3.8.1 First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of Participant G	93
4.3.8.2 Delta Brainwave for Participant G of First qEEG	93
4.3.8.3 Delta Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	93
4.3.8.4 Theta, Alpha and Beta Brainwave for Participant G of First qEEG	94
4.3.8.5 Theta Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	94
4.3.8.6 Alpha Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	94
4.3.8.7 Beta Brainwave for Participant G of Second qEEG	95
4.3.8.8 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate	96

Behaviour(s) of Participant G	
4.3.9 Participant 1	98
4.3.9.1 First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping of Participant 1	98
4.3.9.2 Delta Brainwave for Participant I of First qEEG	98
4.3.9.3 Delta Brainwave for Participant I of Second qEEG	98
4.3.9.4 Theta Brainwave for Participant I of First qEEG	99
4.3.9.5 Theta Brainwave for Participant I of Second qEEG	99
4.3.9.6 Alpha Brainwave for Participant I of First qEEG	99
4.3.9.7 Alpha Brainwave for Participant I of Second qEEG	100
4.3.9.8 Beta Brainwave for Participant I of First qEEG	100
4.3.9.9 Beta Brainwave for Participant I of Second qEEG	100
4.3.9.10 Brainwave Patterns and Correlate	101
Behaviour(s) of Participant I	
4.3.10 Discussions on qEEG brainwave patterns of ASD	102
4.3.11 Mean of Delta, Theta, Alpha and Beta Brainwaves	103
4.3.12 Summary of First and Second qEEG Brain Mapping	106
4.4 Neurofeedback Training Protocol	107
4.4.1 Brainwave Pattern during the Neurofeedback Training Sessions	110
4.4.1.1 Beta Training Protocol	110
4.4.1.2 Delta Training Protocol	112
4.4.1.3 Alpha Training Protocol	114

4.4.1.4 SMR Training Protocol	115
4.4.2 Summary of Neurofeedback Training Session	116
4.5 Behavioural analysis of ASD children before and After NFT for all participants	117

Chapter 5 Summary, Recommendation and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction	120
5.1 Summary	121
5.2 Brainwave Patterns of ASD Children of First and Second qEEG Mapping	122
5.2.1 Delta Brainwave	122
5.2.2 Alpha Brainwave	122
5.2.3 Theta Brainwave	123
5.2.4 Beta and Hi Beta Brainwave	124
5.2.5 Summary on qEEG Brain Mapping Results	124
5.3 Recommendations	125
5.3.1 Larger Participant of ASD Children	125
5.3.2 More Support Data from Normal Children	126
5.3.3 QEEG Checklist Before Session	126
5.3.4 Implementation of Suggested Protocol at Certain Brain Area	127
5.3.5 Report the intensively observed behaviour change	127
5.3.6 Fill Support from family and teachers	127
5.4 Conclusion	128

LIST OF FIGURE

Figure 1	12
Types of brainwaves	
Figure 2	26
Brain Topography of ASD Children	
Figure 3	26
Comparison of qEEG spectra with database (significant different marked below spectra)	
Figure 4	27
Topography comparison of normal (left) and children with ASD (right) for absolute and relative power of delta, theta, alpha, low beta and high beta	
Figure 5	29
The ten-twenty electrode placement system	
Figure 6	31
Connectivity between one areas of brain to another	
Figure 7	35
Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist's (ATEC) Score Benchmark	
Figure 8	52
Indicator to read the topography map	
Figure 9	56
Frequency indicator	
Figure 10	57
First and second Quantitative Electroencephalography brain topography of Delta, Theta, Alpha and Beta brainwave for each participant	
Figure 11	58
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant A	
Figure 12	64
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant B	

Figure 13	69
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant C	
Figure 14	74
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant D	
Figure 15	77
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant E	
Figure 16	82
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant F	
Figure 17	88
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant G	
Figure 18	93
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant H	
Figure 19	98
Spectra Analysis of First (left) and Second (right) qEEG session of participant I	
Figure 20	103
Mean of Delta Brainwave at Frontal-Posterior Region	
Figure 21	103
Mean of Delta Brainwave at Left Hemisphere and Right Hemisphere	
Figure 22	104
Mean of Theta Brainwave at Frontal-Posterior Region	
Figure 23	104
Mean of Theta Brainwave at Left Hemisphere and Right Hemisphere A	
Figure 24	105
Mean of Alpha Brainwave at Frontal-Posterior Region	

Figure 25	105
Mean of Alpha Brainwave at Left Hemisphere and Right Hemisphere	
Figure 26	105
Mean of Beta Brainwave at Frontal-Posterior Region	
Figure 27	106
Mean of Beta Brainwave at Left Hemisphere and Right Hemisphere	
Figure 28	109
Summary of NFT Average Graph	
Figure 29	118
Behaviour of ASD Children Before and After NFT (Below 15 years Old)	
Figure 30	119
Behaviour of ASD Children Before and After NFT (Below 15 years Old)	
Figure 31	117
Indicator Behaviour Modification's Figure	

LIST OF TABLE

Table 1	49
<i>Procedure of Data Collection for qEEG</i>	
Table 2	55
Demographic Data	
Table 3	63
Brainwave Pattern and Correlate Behaviour(s) of Participant A	
Table 4	68
Number of Neurofeedback Training Sessions of Each Participant	
Table 5	73
QEEG summary of all participants	
Table 6	76
Neurofeedback average graph summary of all participants	
Table 7	80
Summary of behaviour of ASD children Before and After the Training	
Table 8	85
Summary of behaviour of ASD children Before and After the Training	
Table 9	91
Before and After Neurofeedback Training of Participant A	
Table 10	95
Brainwave Pattern and Correlate Behaviour(s)Delta Brainwave Frequency (Less than 4 Hz)	
Table 11	101
Brainwave Pattern and Correlate Behaviour(s)Theta Brainwave Frequency (4- 8 Hz)	
Table 12	110
Summary of Beta Training Protocol	
Table 13	112
Summary of Delta Training Protocol	
Table 14	
Summary of Alpha Training Protocol	114

Table 15

114

Summary of SMR Training Protocol

ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAM (EEG) SIGNATURE OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) CHILDREN

The purpose of this research was to explore, analyse and describe the brainwave pattern of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) children using Quantitative Electroencephalogram (qEEG) and suggesting the right neurofeedback training (NFT) protocol. Quantitative Electroencephalogram primarily measures the electric potential field at the scalp surface. Quantitative Electroencephalogram mapping helped to provide an accurate assessment for placement of protocol as compared to behavioural checklist. Then, the researcher discussed all improvements in terms of behaviour modification in correlation with the changes of brainwave patterns. One of every 150 children born today in Malaysia has Autism (Malaysian Psychiatric Association, 2010). Their numbers are increasing; therefore, it is vital to do research on this disorder to improve the quality of life and reduce stress among parents and caregivers. Although there is no cure, appropriate management such as combination of neurofeedback and traditional method may foster normal development and reduce undesirable behaviours of ASD children. This study involved nine participants who were purposely selected from Kuching Autistic Association (KAA) with a diagnosis of having ASD symptoms by medical specialist. Their brain topography was obtained using qEEG brain mapping. Quantitative Electroencephalogram brain mapping followed by an average of 46 NFT sessions to monitor their brainwave. A neurofeedback protocol was designed to suppress the ratio of Theta and Alpha (4-10 Hz) to Beta (16-20) as well as to train the individual to normalize abnormal EEG frequencies. Neurofeedback protocols changed over time depending on participants' mood, health condition and behaviour during training. Secondary qEEG recordings were made to see any brainwave alteration after neurofeedback training. There were series of observations for all participants before NFT as well as a series of observations after the NFT. Findings from qEEG mapping of this research were categorized under the third sub group - high Delta/Theta waves - as discovered by Michael Linden (2004) in his research on the four subtypes of autism. Quantitative Electroencephalogram discovers a pattern of high delta brainwave at prefrontal and frontal area, insufficient theta, alpha and beta brainwave in most of the brain region of ASD children. With regards to connectivity, main findings showed frontal lobe hyperconnectivity as well as hypoconnectivity of frontal region to other regions of the brain and diminished connectivity in language areas. The second qEEG session shows generally decreased Delta activity in frontal region of the brain, increased of theta, alpha and beta activity at most of the brain regions. The results have shown remarkable improvements in the participant's speech, language, communication, sociability, cognitive and behaviour after five months. This research described that the brain lateralizations of ASD children were different from the brainwave pattern of the normal children and demonstrates the efficacy of NFT to help regulate the abnormal brainwaves and

behaviour and improve the neuronal regulation of the brain as indicated by the normal features of the brainwaves.

ABSTRAK

SIGNATUR “ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAM (EEG)” KANAK-KANAK YANG MENGALAMI GANGGUAN SPEKTRUM AUTISMA

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji, menganalisa dan menerangkan pola-pola gelombang otak dalam kalangan kanak-kanak autisma menggunakan “Quantitative Electroencephalogram (qEEG)” serta mencadangkan protocol “Neurofeedback” (NFT) yang sesuai kepada setiap peserta kajian. Pemetaan qEEG dapat memberikan analisis yang tepat mengenai penempatan elektrod and protokol berbanding ujian tingkah laku. Seterusnya, pengkaji membincangkan kesemua peningkatan dari segi perubahan tingkah laku yg berkait rapat dengan perubahan corak gelombang otak. Satu daripada 150 orang kanak-kanak yang dilahirkan di Malaysia hari ini disahkan menghidap autisma (Malaysian Psychiatric Association, 2010). Statistik ini terus meningkat dan kajian tentang permasalahan ini wajar dijalankan untuk meningkatkan kualiti hidup disamping mengurangkan tekanan dalam kalangan ibu bapa dan penjaga. Walaupun tiada rawatan yang boleh menyembuhkan autisma, pengurusan yang bersesuaian seperti kombinasi latihan NFT bersama rawatan konvensional yang lain dapat membantu menggalakkan pertumbuhan yang hampir normal dan mengurangkan tingkah laku yang tidak diingini. Kajian ini melibatkan sembilan peserta yang telah dipilih dari Persatuan Autisma di Kuching, Sarawak yang telah disahkan sebagai kanak-kanak autism oleh doctor perubatan dan pakar kanak-kanak. Topografi otak mereka telah diperolehi menggunakan pemetaan qEEG. Langkah ini diikuti dengan latihan “neurofeedback” dengan purata sebanyak 46 sesi seorang bagi memantau gelombang otak mereka. Protokol NFT telah direka untuk mengurangkan nisbah theta dan alpha (4-10 HZ) kepada beta (16-20 HZ) disamping melatih setiap individu untuk mengimbangkan frekuensi EEG yang tidak normal. Protokol NFT berubah mengikut keadaan peserta semasa latihan seperti emosi peserta, keadaan kesihatan dan tingkah laku. “Quantitative Electroencephalogram” direkod kali kedua untuk melihat sebarang perubahan yang mungkin berlaku selepas latihan NFT. Beberapa siri pemerhatian telah dijalankan sebelum dan selepas NFT. Dapatan dari pemetaan qEEG dalam kajian ini dikategorikan di bawah kumpulan ketiga iaitu gelombang delta/theta yang tinggi seperti yang ditemui oleh Michael Linden (2004) dalam kajiannya berkaitan empat sub jenis autism. Pemetaan qEEG telah menemui corak gelombang delta yang tinggi di bahagian “prefrontal” dan “frontal”, kekurangan gelombang theta, alpha dan beta pada keseluruhan bahagian otak kanak-kanak autism. Berdasarkan dapatan utama kajian, lobus “frontal” menunjukkan “hyperconnectivity” dan lobus “frontal” kebahagian otak yang lain menunjukkan “hypoconnectivity” dan penyusutan activity pada bahagian bahasa. Pemetaan qEEG yang kedua menunjukkan pengurangan aktiviti delta pada bahagian otak “frontal”, peningkatan aktiviti theta, alpha dan beta di keseluruhan bahagian otak. Kajian ini menunjukkan peningkatan yang mengagumkan terhadap bahasa,

komunikasi, kebolehan sosial, kognitif dan tingkah laku sepanjang lima bulan. Kajian ini menerangkan bahawa corak gelombang otak kanak-kanak autisma berbeza daripada corak gelombang otak kanak-kanak normal serta melihat kebolehan NFT untuk mengubah gelombang otak dan tingkah laku serta memperbaiki pengawalan neuro seperti yang ditunjukkan oleh ciri gelombang otak yang normal.